WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A zoom lens apparatus, comprising:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a positive lens arranged at a first sub-position

closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $0.15<(N_{22}-N_{23})<0.40$, wherein N22 is a refractive index of the negative meniscus lens of the second optical lens group and N23 is a refractive index of the positive meniscus lens of the second optical lens group conjoined with the negative meniscus lens.

2. The zoom lens system according to Claim 1, wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $25<(\nu_{22}-\nu_{23})<50$, wherein ν_{22} is an Abbe number of the negative meniscus lens in the second optical lens group and ν_{22} is an Abbe number of the positive meniscus lens conjoined

with the negative meniscus lens in the second optical lens group.

3. The zoom lens system according to Claim 1, wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $1.40<((1/r_{21F})+(1/r_{22F})+(1/r_{22R}))<2.20$, wherein r_{21F} is a radius of curvature of a subject-side surface of the positive lens arranged at the first sub-position in the second optical lens group, r_{22F} is a radius of curvature of a subject-side surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position in the second optical lens group, r_{22R} is a radius of curvature of a conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the positive lens arranged at the third sub-position in the second optical lens group, and Y' is an image height.

4. The zoom lens system according to Claim 1, wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $1.40<(L_{PN}/L_2)<0.70$, wherein L_{PN} is a distance between a summit of the subject-side surface of the positive lens arranged at the first sub-position and a summit of the conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the positive lens arranged at the third sub-position in the second optical lens group, and L_2 is a thickness of the second optical lens group in a direction of a light axis of the second optical lens group.

5. The zoom lens system according to Claim 1, wherein the conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the positive lens arranged at the third sub-position has a radius of curvature which is greatest among lens surfaces included in the second optical lens group.

6. The zoom lens system according to Claim 1, wherein the subject-side surface of the positive lens arranged at the first sub-position in the second optical lens group and an image-side surface of the positive lens arranged at the fourth sub-position are aspherical.

7. A zoom lens apparatus, comprising:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the

subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a first positive lens arranged at a first sub-position closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a second positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $1.40<((1/r_{21F})+(1/r_{22F})+(1/r_{22R}))<2.20$, wherein r_{21F} is a radius of curvature of a subject-side surface of the first positive lens arranged at the first sub-position in the second optical lens group, r_{22F} is a radius of curvature of a subject-side surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position in the second optical lens group, r_{22R} is a radius of curvature of a conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the meniscus positive lens arranged at the third sub-position in the second optical lens group, and Y′ is an image height.

8. A zoom lens apparatus, comprising:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a first positive lens arranged at a first sub-position closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the first positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a second positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality

condition $1.40<(L_{PN}/L_2)<0.70$, wherein L_{PN} is a distance between a summit of the subject-side surface of the first positive lens arranged at the first sub-position and a summit of the conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the meniscus positive lens arranged at the third sub-position in the second optical lens group, and L_2 is a thickness of the second optical lens group in a direction of a light axis of the second optical lens group.

9. A zoom lens apparatus, comprising:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens

group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a first positive lens arranged at a first sub-position closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the first positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a second positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens arranged at the second sub-position and the positive lens arranged at the third sub-position has a radius of curvature which is greatest among lens surfaces included in

the second optical lens group.

10. A digital camera, comprising:

a zoom lens system which comprises:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a

three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a positive lens arranged at a first sub-position closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $0.15<(N_{22}-N_{23})<0.40$, wherein N22 is a refractive index of the negative meniscus lens of the second optical lens group and N23 is a refractive index of the positive meniscus lens of the second optical lens group conjoined with the negative meniscus lens.

11. A personal digital assistance apparatus, comprising:

a zoom lens system which comprises:

a first optical lens group having a negative focal length arranged at a first position closest to a subject;

a second optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a second position second closest to the subject;

an aperture diaphragm which is disposed to a subject side of the second optical lens group closer to the subject in a manner such that the aperture diaphragm is movable integrally with the second optical lens group; and

a third optical lens group having a positive focal length arranged at a third position third closest to the subject,

wherein the first optical lens group, the second optical lens group, and the third optical lens group move in such a way that a distance between the first optical lens group and the second optical lens group is gradually decreased and a distance between the second optical lens group and the third optical lens group is gradually increased when a scaling of the zoom lens system is changed from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge,

wherein the second optical lens group comprises a three-group and four-lens structure which comprises:

a positive lens arranged at a first sub-position closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a greater-curvature surface of the

positive lens faces the subject;

a negative meniscus lens arranged at a second sub-position second closest to the subject in the second optical lens group and such that a concave of the negative meniscus lens faces the subject;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third sub-position third closest to the subject in the second optical lens group; and

a positive lens arranged at a fourth sub-position fourth closest to the subject in the second optical lens group,

wherein the zoom lens system satisfies an inequality condition $0.15<(N_{22}-N_{23})<0.40$, wherein N22 is a refractive index of the negative meniscus lens of the second optical lens group and N23 is a refractive index of the positive meniscus lens of the second optical lens group conjoined with the negative meniscus lens.

12. A zoom lens apparatus, comprising:

a first lens group having a negative focal length and arranged at a first position from a subject side;

a second lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a second position from the subject side;

an aperture diaphragm arranged in front of a subject side surface of the second lens group and configured to move

together with the second lens group; and

a third lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a third position from the subject side,

wherein at least the first and second lens groups move at a time the zoom lens apparatus changes a scaling from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge such that a distance between the first and second lens group is decreased and that a distance between the second and third lens group is increased,

wherein the first lens group comprises:

a first negative meniscus lens having a concave lens surface facing an image plane and arranged at a first in-group position from the subject side;

a double-convex lens arranged at a second in-group position from the subject side; and

a double-concave lens conjoined with the double-concave lens and arranged at a third in-group position from the subject side.

13. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 12, wherein the first lens group further comprises a second negative meniscus lens arranged between the first negative meniscus lens and the double-concave lens.

14. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies an inequality

condition $0.20<(D_4/L_1)<0.40$, wherein D_4 is a distance on a light axis between an image side surface of the second negative meniscus lens in the first lens group and a subject side surface of the double-convex lens and L_1 is a distance on a light axis between a subject side surface of the first negative meniscus lens and an image side surface of the double-concave lens in the first lens group.

15. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies an inequality condition $1.60<(N_{14})<1.90$, wherein D_{14} is a refractive index of the double-concave lens of the first lens group.

16. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies inequality conditions $-0.20<(N_{13}-N_{14})<0.10$ and $5<(\nu_{14}-\nu_{13})<25$, wherein N_{13} is a refractive index of the double-convex lens of the first lens group, N_{14} is a refractive index of the double-concave lens of the first lens group, ν_{13} is an Abbe number of the double-convex lens of the first lens group, and ν_{14} is an Abbe number of the double-concave lens of the first lens group.

17. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein an image side surface of the second negative meniscus lens in the first lens group is aspheric.

18. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein the second lens group comprises:

a first positive lens having a great-curvature surface facing the subject side and arranged at a first in-group position from the subject side;

a negative meniscus lens having a concave surface facing the image side and arranged at a second in-group position from the subject side;

a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens and arranged at a third in-group position from the subject side; and

a second positive lens arranged at a fourth in-group position from the subject side.

19. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies inequality conditions $-0.15<(N_{22}-N_{23})<0.40$ and $25<(\nu_{23}-\nu_{22})<50$, wherein N_{22} is a refractive index of the negative meniscus lens of the second lens group, N_{23} is a refractive index of the positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens in the second lens group, ν_{22} is an Abbe number of the negative meniscus lens of the second lens group, and ν_{23} is an Abbe number of the positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus in the first lens group.

20. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies an inequality condition $1.40<\{(1/r_{21F})+(1/r_{22F})+(1/r_{22R})\}*Y'<2.20$, wherein r_{21F} is a curvature radius of a subject side surface of the first positive lens in the second lens group, r_{22F} is a curvature radius of a subject side surface of the negative meniscus lens in the second lens group, r_{22R} is a curvature radius of a conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens and the positive meniscus lens in the second lens group, and Y' is an image height.

21. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the zoom lens apparatus satisfies an inequality condition $0.40<(L_{PN}/L_2)<0.70$, wherein L_{PN} is a distance on a light axis between the a subject side surface of the first positive lens and a conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens and the positive meniscus lens in the second lens group, and L_2 is a distance on a light axis between the subject side surface of the first positive lens and an image side surface of the second positive lens in the second lens group.

22. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein a curvature of a conjoined surface of the negative meniscus lens and the positive meniscus lens in the second lens group is a greatest curvature in the second lens group.

23. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein a subject side surface of the first positive lens and an image side surface of the second positive lens are aspheric.

24. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 12, wherein the second lens group comprises:

at least one negative lens; and

at least three positive lenses.

25. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 24, wherein the first lens group further comprises a second negative meniscus lens arranged between the first negative meniscus lens and the double-concave lens.

26. The zoom lens apparatus according to Claim 24, wherein the at-least-one negative lens is a negative meniscus lens having a concave surface facing the image side and arranged at a second in-group position from the subject side, and the at-least-one positive lenses are a first positive lens having a great-curvature surface facing the subject side and arranged at a first in-group position from the subject side, a positive meniscus lens conjoined with the negative meniscus lens arranged at a third in-group position from the subject side, and a second positive lens arranged at a fourth

in-group position from the subject side.

27. A digital camera comprising:

a zoom lens apparatus which comprises:

a first lens group having a negative focal length and arranged at a first position from a subject side;

a second lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a second position from the subject side;

an aperture diaphragm arranged in front of a subject side surface of the second lens group and configured to move together with the second lens group; and

a third lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a third position from the subject side,

wherein at least the first and second lens groups move at a time the zoom lens apparatus changes a scaling from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge such that a distance between the first and second lens group is decreased and that a distance between the second and third lens group is increased,

wherein the first lens group comprises:

a first negative meniscus lens having a concave lens surface facing an image plane and arranged at a first in-group position from the subject side;

a double-convex lens arranged at a second in-group position from the subject side; and

a double-concave lens conjoined with the double-concave lens and arranged at a third in-group position from the subject side.

28. A personal digital assistance apparatus, comprising:

a zoom lens apparatus which comprises:

a first lens group having a negative focal length and arranged at a first position from a subject side;

a second lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a second position from the subject side;

an aperture diaphragm arranged in front of a subject side surface of the second lens group and configured to move together with the second lens group; and

a third lens group having a positive focal length and arranged at a third position from the subject side,

wherein at least the first and second lens groups move at a time the zoom lens apparatus changes a scaling from a short focal length edge to a long focal length edge such that a distance between the first and second lens group is decreased and that a distance between the second and third lens group is increased,

wherein the first lens group comprises:

a first negative meniscus lens having a concave lens surface facing an image plane and arranged at a first

in-group position from the subject side;

a double-convex lens arranged at a second in-group position from the subject side; and

a double-concave lens conjoined with the double-concave lens and arranged at a third in-group position from the subject side.